



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

School Governance

Making it Better

Improving school governance



A report from the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools

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School Governance – Making It Better

Learning from the way that governors in special measures schools improved their work

Introduction

1. Governors are public-spirited volunteers who make an invaluable contribution to our schools. Many are eager to know how they can be better at what they do, and this report describes how one particular group of governors, those in schools in special measures, have improved their work. The lessons learned by these governors can equally apply to governors in other schools who want to be more effective. Evidence shows, for example, that even in schools that are judged to be successful, some governing bodies feel they need to improve the contribution they make.
2. Since 1993 the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) has inspected and published a report on every maintained school in England, and is now well into the second round of inspections. Every Registered Inspector (RgI) is required to make judgements about how well the governing body fulfils its responsibilities, and how governors account for the performance and improvement of the school. In making their judgements, inspectors are mindful of the three key roles that governors should fulfil.

Key roles of governing bodies:

- provide a strategic view
- act as a critical friend
- ensure accountability.

3. Schools requiring special measures often have governing bodies that are not fulfilling their role or discharging their responsibilities. Usually, these governors want to support the school. However, in many cases they have become unquestioning about the school's work. Frequently, their monitoring and evaluation of the school are their main weaknesses.
4. Where school governance is identified in a school's Section 10 inspection report as weak, and these governors receive the help they need, there is clear evidence to show that improvements usually follow. It is possible to make a difference.
5. This report draws on evidence from two main sources:
 - (a) a large number of termly monitoring inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) to schools that were made subject to special measures or deemed to have serious weaknesses, particularly but not exclusively where the governing body was ineffective;



- (b) a programme of interviews in schools that were or had been in special measures, where the governing body went on to be more effective.
- 6. This report outlines in each section the causes and characteristics of ineffective governance, including the initial difficulties governors faced in addressing their schools' problems, and describes some of the ways forward governors used to improve their work. The five sections of this report reflect the main areas where governors concentrated their efforts.

The Action Plan

- Clarifying the immediate priorities

Membership of the Governing Body

- Making changes, to make a difference

Working Together

- Meetings and other organisational issues

Getting the Paperwork Right

- Improving school documentation

Monitoring and Evaluating the School

- Knowing how well the school is performing
- 7. Although each governing body's journey through special measures is different in detail, there are many common factors to the improvements that governors make.



Where governors make a difference:

- governors are clear about the aims of the school, and the values they wish to promote
- the governing body and all its committees, have clear terms of reference, and an inter-related programme of meetings
- governors bring a wide range of expertise and experience, and attend meetings regularly
- the chair of governors gives a clear lead
- meetings are chaired well, and efficiently clerked
- there is a clear school plan, understood by all, which focuses on improving the school
- relationships between the governors and the staff are open and honest
- governors' training is linked to the school's priorities, and the needs of individual governors
- individual governors are clear about their role
- the school's documentation is systematically reviewed
- governors have rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work.



The Action Plan

Clarifying the immediate priorities

8. The very first task that governors must tackle when the school is made subject to special measures is to construct an 'action plan'. This document describes how the school will address all the weaknesses that are identified in the inspection report, under the heading '*What should the school do to improve further?*'

Initial difficulties

9. Governors frequently find it difficult to focus on the construction of the school's action plan. They are still coming to terms with the judgement that the school requires special measures, and may be in denial, feel angry or surprised.
10. If the inspection report has been specifically critical of the governors, they may experience a lack of self-confidence. Where they had not realised how seriously the school was failing, they often feel unable or unqualified to take responsibility for finding solutions to the problems.
11. In many schools in special measures the headteacher's leadership and management are severely criticised, and so governors often feel even more bewildered as to who will help them with the action plan, especially where the headteacher leaves the school soon after the inspection, which sometimes happens.

After the management of one secondary school had been criticised during an inspection, the headteacher went on long-term sick leave and eventually resigned. The deputy headteacher worked hard to keep the school going on a day-to-day basis, but lacked skills in strategic management. The governors, still recovering from the shock of the report and unsure how long the headteacher would be absent, allowed a few weeks to pass by without making any progress on the action plan. During this time they had several meetings with members of the local education authority (LEA). Eventually, a management group was established, which included the deputy headteacher, senior teacher, chair and vice-chair of governors, and an LEA adviser. This group finally completed the action plan, but took a little longer than the 40 days in which the work should have been done.

12. In some cases, the governors had been aware of the weaknesses in the school before the inspection took place, but had not felt able to tackle them. Occasionally, tensions between the headteacher and the governors had been an obstacle to improving the school, and would be likely to impede the writing of the action plan. In these situations the governors sometimes welcome special measures, because they feel it provides them with the opportunity and legitimacy to take long-overdue, firm action, such as confronting the ineffectiveness of the headteacher's leadership or weaknesses in the senior management team.



Ways forward

13. Whatever the circumstances, governors have invariably found a way forward. Usually, their first line of support is the LEA. A number of LEAs have access to good quality action plans, often because they have developed some expertise through supporting other schools, including some in special measures. It is common for schools in special measures to be allocated a link officer or adviser from the LEA, who works with the governors and senior staff on writing the action plan, and then during its subsequent implementation. This has often worked well.
14. Where the headteacher leaves the school, a significant number of governing bodies have worked with the LEA to second an experienced headteacher from another school to help them through the initial stages of special measures. Alternatively, a deputy is made acting headteacher, while the longer-term position of the headteacher is clarified. Of course, there are schools where the leadership of the headteacher is not identified in the report as a weakness. In some schools, for example, the headteacher is relatively new in post, and has not had sufficient time to improve the school before the inspection takes place. These headteachers usually work effectively with governors to construct the action plan, since the key issues in the inspection report tend to confirm and illuminate their evaluation of the school's problems, and reaffirm their priorities for improvement.

The headteacher in one middle school had only been in post for a term when the inspection took place. She had already expressed her concerns to the governors about pupils' low standards of attainment and weaknesses in teaching. She had started to tackle these problems by working with middle managers on their roles and responsibilities. For her the inspection was timely. It gave her the 'ammunition' she needed to tackle the school's problems with greater urgency. The staff became more accepting of what the headteacher was trying to do, because they understood improvements were necessary and they wanted to be removed from special measures as quickly as possible.

15. When a school is made subject to special measures, the headteacher and a representative of the governing body, usually the chair, and a representative of the LEA are invited to a seminar, run by HMI, on preparing an action plan. Schools have found these seminars very helpful because they draw on the experience and expertise of HMI involved in monitoring schools in special measures, and involved in judging the acceptability of the final action plan. These seminars allow headteachers and governors to work with HMI on an early draft of their plan, and to meet and talk with other schools that are in a similar situation.



The headteacher of one small primary school went to an HMI seminar with his chair of governors. They were both very anxious about the quality of their draft action plan, even though they had worked very hard on its creation. However, they soon realised the day was designed to be supportive, and were happy to accept suggestions on how the plan could be improved. In particular, they made the dates of actions more specific, costings more precise, and ensured the success criteria were quantified wherever possible. They incidentally met with another small school in special measures and subsequently contacted them to share ideas and strategies.

16. Governors must be cautious about some of the strategies that have been used to help construct action plans. A few LEAs have been told by OFSTED that their record in supporting schools in preparing action plans has been unsatisfactory, and governors should question the LEA on their track record before taking advice on their own school's action plan. In the case of seconding a headteacher to the school, governors need to ensure that the length of the secondment is right to meet the needs of the school. There have been examples where seconded headteachers have helped to write an appropriate action plan, but have returned to their own school before the plan has been sufficiently implemented*. Whereas this does not always prove to be a problem, it can leave governors and the next headteacher using a plan to which they are not totally committed. Some governing bodies have sensibly reviewed the action plan when the headteacher has changed.
17. Governors also need to ensure that any advice they receive does not lead to an action plan which is written to a formula, or which fails to capture the needs of their individual school. Having said this, many schools have similar problems and are likely, therefore, to use similar solutions. Action plans should address all the key issues identified in the inspection report under '*What should the school do to improve further?*'; and any further areas for improvement identified by the school. Most good action plans are tabular in format.

*see appendix: 'Making Headway'



Good action plans should identify:

- the actions to be taken, or the tasks set
- the people responsible
- the dates for start and completion of the action
- the resources and costs involved
- the success criteria
- who is to monitor its implementation
- who is to evaluate its effect, and how they will do this.

18. Governors may be eager to involve as many staff as possible in the construction of the action plan. It is usually true that when people have been involved in developing an action plan they feel more confident about carrying it out. However, when an inspection report shows that a number of staff are not fulfilling their roles and their professional competence has been called into doubt, the governors need to strike the right balance between consultation and urgency. It is not always possible to consult widely.
19. Many schools set up a small working group of governors and senior staff to draft an early version of the action plan, and this usually works well. Often the draft plan shows how the different committees of the governing body will be linked to particular key issues. However, it is important that the full governing body is involved in the action planning process, and they should have an opportunity to ask questions about the plan or raise any issues that concern them, before it is finally agreed by everyone. Most governing bodies rightly consult the LEA on the merits of the plan before it is finally sent to OFSTED.
20. On their first monitoring visit to schools in special measures, HMI make a judgement about the quality of the plan and, where it is found to have some weaknesses, ask the governors to make further amendments. This ensures that the action plan is a secure working document likely to lead to the necessary improvements.

See appendix: 'Action Planning for School Improvement'



Membership of the Governing Body

Making changes, to make a difference

Initial difficulties

21. Many schools in special measures have weaknesses in the composition and structure of their governing body. Sometimes there are vacancies, or there is a history of erratic attendance at governors' meetings. In some areas of social deprivation, schools experience difficulties recruiting or retaining governors, particularly from the local community. It is not uncommon to find that the governors nominated by the local authority are irregular attenders.
22. In a high proportion of schools where governance needs to be improved, there is a limited range of expertise and/or experience among the governing body, and its members have had little training to help them address the shortfalls in their skills. Sometimes there is a high proportion of long-serving governors who have found it difficult to keep up with the recent changes and the new responsibilities of governors. Often, individual governors lack confidence at meetings and do not feel able to make a meaningful contribution to discussions.

In one secondary school situated in a large council estate the few governors who attended meetings regularly clearly wanted to support the school and were prepared to give their time to do so. However, meetings often proceeded inefficiently, going over items from a previous meeting that had been poorly attended. One parent governor later revealed that she did not always understand the business being discussed and, not wanting to appear inadequate, lacked the confidence to ask for further explanation. This in turn affected her attendance, because she felt it would make little difference to the school whether she attended or not.

23. Invariably, governors' meetings in such schools rely too much on the headteacher or the chair to steer the agenda, and other governors can feel outside the real decision-making process.

In one special school, many governors felt they were at meetings to rubber stamp decisions made by the headteacher and chair of governors, who enjoyed a close working relationship, and who understood the procedures and requirements relating to special schools. Nobody felt they were deliberately being excluded from making a real contribution, but few felt able to challenge decisions or raise issues.



Ways forward

24. After being placed in special measures, many governing bodies review their composition and organisation. Where the governors have been criticised in an inspection report, the chair frequently offers or is persuaded to stand down. Some governors, realising that they do not have the inclination or time to support a school in difficulties, resign from their position. Often new governors are appointed, and in many cases the LEA has been effective in helping to recruit new governors with particular skills and expertise. These changes to the governing body need to be managed effectively, as the introduction of new governors does not, in itself, guarantee improvement. Where the changes have been well managed the new governors have been inducted to their role effectively, and have understood the work-load involved.

In one primary school the new headteacher, the chair of governors and an officer of the LEA worked hard to recruit four new governors to fill vacancies. They made particular efforts to recruit someone with a business background and understanding of finance, and parents who could represent the large Bangladeshi community served by the school. They worked together to produce a pamphlet, 'Being a Governor At Our School', that outlined the way in which the governing body operated, the frequency of meetings, the range of ways in which governors could support the school's work, and the degree of commitment required from individual governors. Each new governor was helped to draw up their own training programme, and each was consulted after meetings to check they felt comfortable with their role. This was achieved in a relaxed and informal way so that new governors were not overwhelmed by their responsibilities. The headteacher made time to thank personally the new governors for their contribution to the school's development, and this helped them to feel valued.

25. Some schools found that the appointment of a new governor with recognised expertise did not work as well as they had hoped, as in one secondary school where the headteacher of a nearby successful school found that the responsibilities of his own work prevented him from being a successful governor in another school.
26. In nearly all cases where new governors made an effective contribution to school improvement, it was due to the care with which they were chosen, to their understanding of what they were taking on, and the training they undertook.

LEA special powers

27. Some LEAs exercise their special power to appoint extra governors to support schools in special measures. The appointment of these extra governors has often been successful in improving school management, but once again, only where they have been selected with regard to the specific needs of the school. Where extra



governors have been imposed insensitively on a governing body, tensions have arisen: some of the original governors have resented the implication that it will take new people to turn the school around, even though this may be the case. Some LEAs have taken care to avoid such problems by involving the existing governors in identifying their new colleagues.

In one primary school the LEA link adviser encouraged the governors to consider what additional expertise they would like brought to the governing body. The governors knew of a parent who was a police officer, who they felt would be a helpful addition to the governing body. Pupils' behaviour in and out of school was a problem and governors felt that closer links with the police would benefit their work. Soon after, the parent in question joined them and was able to give considerable support to the school.

In a secondary school where the governors were inexperienced but eager to help the school, their LEA adviser identified a retired local business-woman, with several years experience as a chair of a governing body, as a possible additional governor. The governors agreed she would bring useful insights to their work. In the end the woman concerned so enjoyed her work at the school that she stayed on as a governor for a long time.

28. In some cases, these extra governors have later been co-opted to vacancies on the governing body after the school has been removed from special measures, giving valuable continuity to the governance of the school.

Effective governing bodies have:

- a full complement of governors
- an effective chairperson
- good attendance at meetings
- a wide range of expertise and experience
- open and honest relationships between governors and the headteacher
- additional governors (if used) chosen with care
- new governors inducted to their role.



29. Some LEAs exercise their special power to withdraw governors' delegated powers, particularly when they feel the governors are ineffective. This can happen where difficult staffing issues need attention, or occasionally where a school has a large budget deficit. In such schools the LEA establishes a special management group, often consisting of education officers and advisers, to ensure that the school's business is managed effectively and put back onto a secure footing. In the best cases, LEAs are careful to train the governors and senior staff, so that they will be able to manage the school effectively when delegated powers are returned.
30. Some LEAs have been successful in using the removal of delegated powers as a means to pressure weak or ineffective governing bodies to review their composition, and improve their working practices, so that the same problems do not arise in the future.
31. The removal of delegated powers can also be a strategy for supporting the school, helping governors to focus on their roles and responsibilities in areas other than finance.

The governors of one school were glad to be relieved of managing the school's finances. One governor said: 'Having to construct a good action plan, and re-establish how we were going to monitor and evaluate the school's progress, were made considerably easier by not having to cope with the budget. We were glad to have some of our responsibilities taken away, so that we could have time to build up our competence in other areas first.'

32. The establishment of a special management group while a school has delegated powers removed is not always a total success. There have been examples where governors have been unclear about the roles and responsibilities of the respective groups during the time that delegated powers are removed. When a management group is effective, however, it can play an important part in supporting the school through special measures.

In one primary school the LEA set up a special management group when it removed the school's delegated powers. The group included the headteacher, the chair of governors, the school's link adviser, a senior adviser, a financial officer of the LEA, and a headteacher of a nearby successful primary school. The group met once each term. The agenda always included a reflection of the latest monitoring letter from HMI, feedback from the link adviser's own visits, some analysis of the school's financial position, and a review of both the school's and the LEA's action plan. After just one meeting the group had the LEA's agreement that the budget deficit could be managed over two years, identified two teachers for redundancy, agreed a programme of intensive support and staff development for literacy and numeracy, and agreed to fund the secondment of a deputy headteacher to strengthen the senior management team. It would not have been possible for the governing body themselves to have achieved the same as quickly.



Working Together

Meetings and other organisational issues

33. Some governors are able to give more time to their school than others. Many governors, for example, are retired or are parents who are not in full-time employment, and are able to visit the school easily during the day. Some governors find it difficult to visit the school because of their work commitments, but can make a valuable contribution to meetings, perhaps using their particular expertise in, for example, finance, community work, or business management.

Initial difficulties

34. Schools in special measures often have a governing body that does not function effectively as a team. This is usually because they have not established a coherent pattern of meetings, their meetings are badly co-ordinated, and individual governors are unsure of their specific role. This often leads to considerable frustration.

As a parent I was eager to play my part on the governing body, and attended my first full meeting with interest. I was surprised that people arrived up to half an hour late, and the chair delayed the start of the meeting until enough governors were present. As the meeting proceeded it was clear that a number of governors made no contribution, while others were always having their say. I was also surprised that the headteacher used the meeting to go over the information that had been sent to us in advance, and how little time was spent in discussion. The chair took us through the agenda, but was loath to push the meeting on. We did not eventually finish until 10.30pm, by which time two governors had left to relieve baby-sitters.

35. Clearly, if meetings are not well managed, governors are unlikely to be effective when it comes to making important decisions. The chair of governors plays a crucial role in both managing meetings and in developing a strategic overview of the governing body's work. In many schools put into special measures, the chair of governors stands down, either because they acknowledge they are not the right person to help the school move forward, or because they feel the school's failure makes their position untenable. Where a weak chair of governors stays in position, improvements in governance have been slow to materialise.
36. Governors in schools requiring special measures often decide to hold full governors' meetings more frequently than is usual, in recognition of the urgent need to improve the school. This can be helpful. However, a balanced programme of full governors' and committee meetings can be more effective.



37. Not only do governors need to work well with each other, but they need to have open and honest relationships with the headteacher and staff. Some schools are placed in special measures because of a breakdown of communication and trust between these different groups. Any conflict that arises needs to be resolved before the school can move forward and governors in some schools have asked the LEA or, in the case of a church school, the diocese, to act as arbitrator when a particular problem exists.

In one primary school, long-serving teachers, including the deputy headteacher, were a strong influence on the governing body and resisted some of the changes proposed by the new headteacher. The new headteacher complained to the chair of governors that he was not being supported. The acrimony persisted for two terms, until a new chair of governors was elected. Together with the LEA, the new chair confronted the problem head on, by asking those who could not support the headteacher to consider their position. Eventually, three governors, two of whom were teachers, stood down, and the deputy headteacher took early retirement. The school then made rapid progress in bringing about improvements.

Ways forward

38. Where governors who did not fulfil their role satisfactorily have subsequently become effective, a new chair of governors has often been a key player in improving how they work together and organise themselves.
39. There are many examples of where the new chair has been prepared to take difficult decisions, and has moved quickly to address weaknesses in the senior management of the school or in the quality of teaching. Some realise that making changes in staffing, including the headteacher if necessary, is the only way to start the process of improving the school, whatever the emotional cost or impact on staff morale. The most effective chairs of governors galvanise the rest of the governing body into action, delegating responsibilities to make the most of the expertise and interest that exists, and reforming the ways in which governors conduct their business so that the needs of the school are more efficiently met. Although the chair of governors should have a close working relationship with the headteacher, it should never cloud his/her judgement or impartiality, nor should the relationship be such that other governors feel excluded from important discussions.
40. The chair of governors often takes an invaluable lead in co-ordinating links with other agencies to support school improvement, particularly the LEA or in some cases the local Education Action Zone.



An effective chair of governors should:

- give a clear lead in organising the governing body's work
- delegate roles and ensure other governors are fully involved
- manage meetings efficiently
- hold regularly meetings with the headteacher
- keep other governors fully informed
- co-operate with other agencies to support school improvement.

41. Effective governing bodies publish a clear annual programme that shows the dates of committee and full governors' meetings. The frequency of these meetings varies from school to school, but the important factor is whether or not the pattern of meetings meets the needs of the school. Some schools decide in principle to hold a full governors' meeting, say, every half-term, but other schools have found that it is best to time meetings to coincide with the need to make specific decisions.

One secondary school decided to have a full governors' meeting every half-term, but soon realised that this did not fully meet the school's needs. There were certain times of the year when the governors needed to meet more frequently than others, such as when setting the budget, finalising the staffing for the next academic year, or reviewing and analysing the school's examination results. In the end, the full governors' meetings were arranged to coincide with these important moments, and the main focus of each meeting's agenda was published well in advance. This helped governors to have a clearer sense of direction and purpose. It also meant that when there was more business to work through, they had more time to do the work.

42. In schools where governors work together well, everyone knows what is expected of them. Effective governing bodies have clear terms of reference for their work, including for each of their committees, and these outline the roles and responsibilities of each group. Terms of reference may contain information on the frequency of meetings, the tasks to be done and by when, and, in the case of committees, how information will be fed back to the full governing body. The strength of having these clear terms of reference is that school governance can be broken down into manageable sections.



The new terms of reference for the premises committee of one nursery school were clear. The committee would meet three times: in October, February and June. In October they would tour the school with the headteacher and agree what improvements could be made to the school environment. In February they would check how the work was progressing, identify the money that was to be available from the budget in April, and agree their next priority. In June they would review the year and produce a small report for a full governors' meeting, briefly considering their likely priorities for the next school year. By being well organised in this way the committee's work-load was realistic and achievable.

43. In some schools there is a clear view of the respective roles of the full governing body and the committees. Committees are usually small, well-focused groups that manage their business more efficiently than larger meetings of governors. Chairs of committees are more effective when they are the more active members of the governing body. Some schools have working groups which are formed for specific purposes and are disbanded when their task has been completed.

In one secondary school a working group was established in order to draft the governors' annual report to parents. The group included both parent and teacher governors, and they used the most recent annual report as a starting point for their discussions, deciding which aspects they wanted to keep the same and which they wanted to change. The group met twice and then presented a draft report to the full governing body.

44. The work of the various committees can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the governing body. Such committees are often responsible for making key recommendations to the full governing body. Usually, the full governing body will not discuss the issue all over again, but may raise points for clarification or seek to make amendments. If this system is working well, only rarely should the recommendation be overturned.

The curriculum committee in a small secondary school, strongly influenced by the headteacher, recommended that drama be removed as a discrete subject from Key Stage 3, in order to make more time for religious education. It was proposed that drama became an element within the English scheme of work. The full governing body would not ratify this decision because it was felt that drama was making a good contribution to the pupils' creative and social development, and the standards of pupils' attainment in this subject were high. After much heated discussion, the curriculum committee agreed to take another look at the problem. In the end, the school found some more time for religious education by reorganising the provision in history and geography.



45. Some governing bodies set up a special committee that carefully monitors the school's progress through the action plan and reports to the full governing body. This usually works well, although it is important to remember that the full governing body retains accountability for the school's progress. Such committees tend to consist of the chairs of all the other committees, and this ensures that the various aspects of school improvement are brought together in a coherent way.
46. The effective management of governors' meetings is crucial if the business in hand is to be dealt with properly. Once again the chair is a key player. In some schools each agenda item is given an approximate time, and the chair uses these time allocations to ensure the meeting does not run late.
47. Where meetings are well managed, each agenda item is tackled systematically. Invariably, the meeting involves a degree of presentation, for example, the headteacher may talk through a new policy, or a subject co-ordinator may be attending the meeting to report on the progress being made in their subject area. This is often followed by an opportunity for discussion, or for questions to be asked. An effective chair makes sure that this is not dominated by just one or two people. Finally, many agenda items require a decision to be made, for example, to ratify a new policy. Some agenda items do not require a decision to be made, because they are for information, or part of the governors' monitoring of the school. However, as the governing body is an executive group, meetings where no decisions are made should be rare.
48. All governors' meetings benefit from the services of a good clerk. The quality of clerking is usually at least sound and often good, even in schools where the work of the governors is weak. A good clerk ensures that information, agendas and minutes are all sent to governors at the right time, and that minutes of meetings accurately record what takes place. Effective clerks also research information for governors, for example, the requirements of recent educational legislation, or details of the LEA's budget formula.
49. Some governors' clerks also work in the school in an administrative capacity, which gives them good contextual knowledge of the school. This can work well, but governors need to be satisfied that confidentiality is maintained.



Governors' meetings are well organised and effective when:

- there is a clear programme of meetings throughout the year
- meetings start and end on time, and are purposeful
- the agenda and relevant papers are sent out well in advance
- the chair manages the meeting effectively and encourages the participation of others
- there is a balance between presentation, discussion and decision-making
- the clerk has the appropriate skills
- the minutes record accurately what happened during the meeting, and are sent out promptly.

50. Good governing bodies make sure their agendas and minutes are made available to the staff, so that the governors' business can be seen to be completely open, except when confidential staffing issues are being discussed.

51. In some schools, governors collectively decide that each individual governor will agree personal objectives that clearly show what they will actually do, according to the time and commitment they are able to give. This might be done informally or be written down. These objectives may identify any special responsibility that a governor has, and the tasks they will undertake to fulfil this role. Governors usually find it helpful to know exactly what they are to do, and their contribution to the school subsequently improves. Working in this way allows the governors to appreciate more fully the range of their work, and also to see where there are gaps in the way they support the school. It also helps prevent some governors feeling they make too little significant contribution.

One governor of a large junior school accepted the role of governor linked to literacy. She was eager to do this well, but was not really clear what was involved. She was glad of the guidance given by the headteacher, who agreed with her the following formal programme for the term:



Sample tasks for literacy governor (spring term)

- attend one full governors' meeting and one curriculum committee meeting (January 15, February 19)
- attend staff meeting, looking at pupils' work (January 16)
- sit in on a Year 4 literacy hour to see how it works in practice (March 20)
- meet with literacy co-ordinator to discuss the improvements made to pupils' standards of attainment (March 20)
- write brief report for all governors (by April 27).

Other governors in the school could not commit time to the school during the day, and this was reflected in their objectives. The chair of the finance committee, for example, was able to spend time in the evenings studying the school's budget, finding ways to make small but helpful savings, so this work formed part of his objectives.

52. Where governors work together effectively, they invariably ensure they have a programme of training to support their own development. The majority of governing bodies initially look to their LEA to help with their training needs. Most LEAs run regular courses for governors, and often these are effective in helping governors to understand their work better. Some of these courses are provided centrally and cover general areas of interest, for example, a course on the roles and responsibilities of governors, including a look at statutory requirements, or a course to help governors prepare for an OFSTED inspection. Many LEAs run introductory courses for new governors, and courses on strategic management where, for example, the chair of governors and the headteacher are invited jointly to attend. Other courses may be tailor-made for an individual school, to help governors improve their skills while focusing on a specific issue facing the school. Often such courses take place in the school itself.

The governors in one primary school in a socially deprived area knew the pupils' attainment was below average, but wanted to know if pupils were making good progress. An adviser of the LEA came to the school and worked with governors one evening, looking closely at the school's assessment information, showing the governors how pupils' progress was being measured and recorded, and how the school could identify those pupils who were underachieving. This gave governors an insight into how they might monitor pupils' achievement in the future.



53. Some LEAs encourage schools to group themselves together for training. This often helps governors in smaller primary schools to share ideas and to commission a training course that one school on its own may not be able to afford. Grouping schools in 'pyramids', which may include a secondary school and all its partner primary schools, sometimes helps to strengthen links between different phases of education.
54. Some governing bodies join national associations such as the National Association of Governors and Managers*, the Institute of School and College Governors*, or the National Governors' Council*, which may run conferences on new developments, inviting keynote speakers working in education. These associations produce newsletters or guidance to keep governors up to date with issues of concern, for example, the governors' role in performance management. Some individual LEAs have a governors' association, often affiliated to a national organisation, and this helps governors in an area to link with those in other local schools.
55. In the more effective schools, governors ensure their own training is linked to the school's staff development plan, which itself is informed by the school development plan. In this way, training can link with the priorities of the school in a more coherent way, for example, when schools introduced the literacy hour as part of the drive to raise standards of attainment, both staff and governors were often involved in the training programme. Obviously, the teachers' training was more specific to their work in the classroom, but governors gained an understanding of how the national strategy was to work.

* see appendix



Getting the Paperwork Right

Improving school documentation

56. Most governing bodies know that while effective school governance is not achieved just through the production of good documentation, getting the paperwork right is, nonetheless, a great help in clarifying and guiding their work.
57. In a significant proportion of schools made subject to special measures, and where governance was weak, governors were unsure of the school's basic aims, ill-informed about the contents of the school development plan, insufficiently involved in the formulation of school policies and procedures, and unclear about their role.
58. Where the governors went on to improve their effectiveness, they often realised the need to overhaul important school documents so that they and the staff understood how the school was going to move forward. They recognised that a pre-requisite for this was to engage themselves and the staff in a rigorous debate about the kind of school they wanted to create, their priorities for creating such a school, and what they would actually do to make their vision a reality. The discussions involved were seen to be every bit as important as the final document.
59. The actual task of writing new documents usually falls to the senior staff and co-ordinators, as they have the professional expertise required, and are going to be involved in the implementation of any new policy or initiative. However, governors are responsible for ensuring the school's documentation is in place, and should be satisfied that they inform the school's work.
60. The main documentation that governors need to concern themselves with are:

School documentation

- formal statement of the school's aims
- school improvement plan, containing targets for improvement
- policy statements
- information for parents.



Statement of the school's aims

61. Governors should produce a statement of aims, which will underpin all the school's work and establish a clear set of values.

Initial difficulties

62. The stated aims of many weak schools are not reflected in the way the school operates, and in some schools the governors are unaware of them altogether. Often this is because the aims were established many years earlier and never revised, or were produced in isolation by a small management group without proper consultation with others. Some schools have aims that are worthy and appropriate, but the school behaves in a way that is unlikely to promote them. In some schools the aims are too vague, and it is difficult to know how governors can check they are being implemented.

In one primary school's aims there was a strong desire to prepare pupils for a multi-cultural society, but opportunities to do this were not sufficiently built into the school curriculum, and the school had no mechanism for evaluating its success in meeting this aim.

In a secondary school many teachers spoke harshly or sarcastically to the pupils, even though the school's aims had a clear statement about providing pupils with a caring and supportive environment.

Ways forward

63. Where governors and the headteacher have worked effectively to clarify the school's aims, levels of consultation have been good, involving teaching and non-teaching staff, and in some cases, parents and pupils. Involving pupils and parents often helps governors to show the wider school community that they are serious about establishing a positive set of values that will guide the school's future development, and this can reassure everyone that the school's weaknesses are being tackled from a fundamental level.

Following the judgement that a secondary school required special measures, the governors called a series of meetings, including a joint meeting with the staff to re-define the school's aims, and another meeting for parents, at which they clarified the school's aims and invited the parents to respond. One positive outcome of this meeting was that a group of interested parents was identified, who wanted to play a fuller part in the life of the school.



64. Many governing bodies have school aims that refer to a broad and balanced curriculum, to promoting high standards, to equality of opportunity, and to preparing pupils for life beyond the school. In the best schools, governors also ensure that their decisions support their aims, and have clear strategies for checking they are being implemented. Often these strategies are incorporated into the school development plan.

In a secondary school, the governors found the aim 'to ensure that every pupil's potential is fully realised' to be too broad, and too difficult to evaluate. It was fine as a general aspiration, but eventually the governors agreed new aims that could more easily be linked to the school development plan. The aim 'to ensure that pupils achieve high standards of work', for example, could be directly linked to the school's strategies for raising attainment, and it would be possible to make a connection between what the school was doing and the pupils' achievements. The aim 'to ensure that pupils are good citizens of their community' could be evaluated against the school's pastoral system, the responsibilities pupils were encouraged to take, the school council's work, and links with the community.

The school improvement plan

65. The school improvement plan differs from the post-inspection action plan. The action plan is only concerned with addressing the weaknesses identified during the inspection and covered in the key issues of the inspection report, whereas the improvement plan covers all the actions that a school will take over a period of time, including how it will maintain what it already does well.
66. Obviously, governors cannot operate using two plans without the potential for some confusion. In schools that have sought to find a coherent solution to this problem, the action plan becomes part of the broader development plan. However, schools in special measures need to address the identified weaknesses urgently, and so the governors' action plan alone is often sufficient in steering the school forward in the initial stages. As schools work through the action plan they soon realise the need to have a clear school development plan to take the school into the next stages.

Initial difficulties

67. Many of the difficulties governors face in establishing a school development plan are the same as those for the action plan.



68. A common weakness in many schools is that governors have historically been insufficiently involved in the production and monitoring of the school development plan. In too many cases there has been a tendency for the headteacher to produce the plan in isolation, with the governors doing little other than ratifying it at one of their meetings. Consequently, the governors in these schools tend to lack a clear sense of direction, or have little idea if the school is making the progress it should.

In one school the governors allowed the headteacher too much control of the development plan, and allowed her to 'blind them with science' when she presented it at one of their meetings. The governors had no real say in the format or content of the plan, but felt, nonetheless, they had been duly consulted. In effect, the plan went through unchanged, even though it had many weaknesses. This situation arose because the governors lacked confidence in their own expertise or knowledge, and the headteacher had been happy to keep them uninformed.

69. In some cases the governors monitor the implementation of the development plan on a superficial level, focusing too much on actions and tasks completed, rather than outcomes or improvements. In such schools governors are often surprised to be told by inspectors that they do not sufficiently monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan.

Ways forward

70. In schools where the governing body is particularly weak, the headteacher, often newly appointed, was asked to construct the improvement plan, because there has been an urgent need to press on with the work of improving the school. At the same time, schools have realised they should have a programme of training for governors, so that they can be better equipped to fulfil their responsibilities in the future.
71. Where governors have a good grasp of school development planning it is often because they have been helped to understand what is involved. Many governing bodies, for example, make effective use of training provided by the LEA, or in some schools the headteacher talks governors through the process step by step, so that they can make a positive contribution.
72. Increasingly, governing bodies are mindful of the LEA's education development plan (EDP), which sets down the agreed priorities for schools in the area, and these should inform the content of the school development plan. Education development plans usually focus on raising standards, improving teaching, developing assessment practices, and monitoring and evaluation.



73. There is no fixed format for a school improvement plan, but many governing bodies have (a) an introduction that gives contextual information, and (b) a section in tabular format, similar to an action plan, that deals with the various issues the school needs to address. This section identifies the actions to be taken, those responsible for the work, the dates for start and completion, the costs involved, the success criteria, and how the plan will be monitored and evaluated.
74. There is no one right process for governors to use when constructing an improvement plan. In some schools the plan is constructed over time and involves a range of different groups, for example, a governors' premises committee might write that part of the plan relating to the maintenance and redecorating of the school, whereas the section of the plan relating to raising standards of literacy might involve the headteacher, chair of governors and the literacy co-ordinator. Where the plan is the work of many people, and providing the process is well co-ordinated, it can often be a powerful tool for improving the school, because everyone feels they have made a contribution and that their ideas have been valued.

One secondary school in special measures was making good progress on its action plan, and the headteacher and governors wanted to move on to a school development plan to build on what had been achieved. Each faculty was linked to a named governor who consulted the head of faculty on their part of the development plan. Training for staff and governors was arranged so that everyone had a common understanding of the process, and it was agreed that each faculty would use a common format and main headings. This way of working had many benefits; key among these was that it provided a systematic way to involve large numbers of key people in the development planning process. It was particularly effective in building strong relationships between teachers and governors. It also helped to identify which faculties found development planning difficult, and allowed extra support to be targeted appropriately.

A good school improvement plan should identify:

- the issues to be tackled
- the actions to be taken, or the tasks set
- the people responsible
- the dates for start and completion
- the resources and costs involved
- the success criteria
- who is to monitor and evaluate its effect, and how they will do this.



75. In some small schools one or two governors and the headteacher usually take responsibility for initially drafting the development plan, presenting it later to the full governing body for them to make comments. This works well when schools operate on a small scale.

Policy statements

Initial difficulties

76. Many schools in special measures lack policies in key areas, and therefore fail to meet legal requirements. Sometimes schemes of work for the subjects of the National Curriculum are incomplete. Often schools have policies that are out of date and do not inform or help the working of the school.
77. It is common to find that governors in these schools are unaware of the shortcomings in the school's policy documents. The reasons for this are varied. Governors may not understand which policies a school should have, and so they are unaware of any gaps. Some headteachers have misled governors about the state of the school policies, asserting that all is well when this is not the case.

The governing body in one secondary school discovered at the inspection feedback that they did not have policies for sex education or literacy, and that the special educational needs policy pre-dated current legislation. None of the governors were aware of these omissions.

In one primary school in special measures, governors were surprised to be told by inspectors they did not have policies and schemes of work for art, music, and design and technology, nor were these subjects identified on the school development plan for attention.

Ways forward

78. Although it can be difficult for governors to know what policies and schemes of work the school ought to have, especially when changes to requirements are frequent, they should have procedures in place to check requirements and should seek guidance from the headteacher or the LEA.
79. Where governors monitor the school's policies effectively, they have a list of what ought to be in place, the time each policy was ratified, and a rolling programme for reviewing the state of these policies over time. The school improvement plan will already clarify which policies are a priority for review or development this year and possibly beyond, and governors will know which policies were reviewed the previous year. There will usually be areas of the school's work that are low priority, and it may well be that some policies needing to be updated have to wait, because of other pressures. However, given a systematic approach to policy review, based on sound development planning, governors can be confident they have structures to address any areas needing attention.



Where governors develop good documentation they have:

- clear aims that underpin the school's work
- plans for developing and improving the school (for example, action plan, school improvement plan)
- schemes of work that detail what pupils are to learn and be able to do
- policies that show how the school will operate and the values that it promotes
- information for parents that shows how the school is performing (for example, annual report for parents).

Information for parents

Initial difficulties

80. In many schools in difficulties, communication with parents is un-satisfactory, and parents feel uninformed about the school's work. It is usual to find that governors have produced their annual report to parents, but often its formal and dull presentation fails to engage the parents' attention. The same is sometimes true of more routine newsletters or other correspondence from governors to parents.

The governors at one secondary school realised that sending several pages of information to parents printed in close text on A4 paper, and containing several charts of statistical information, was not proving to be an effective way to communicate. They were meeting legal requirements, but their messages were not really reaching the parents.

81. When inspectors talk to parents they sometimes find a high level of dissatisfaction about communications between the school and home, even though the evidence shows that information is regularly sent to them.
82. Too many governing bodies leave these important documents to the headteacher to produce. The headteacher certainly has an important role to play, but governors need to be active in promoting the school within the community.



Ways forward

83. To improve links with parents, schools have used a number of simple strategies, for example, the governors' report to parents in one primary school used illustrations by the pupils to make it more 'parent friendly', while a secondary school made good use of computer graphics and photographs to enhance the document. These may seem like cosmetic changes, but where they result in parents having a clearer view of the school, they are worthwhile.

In one primary school with serious weaknesses the governors sent out a half-termly newsletter called 'Success', which was a celebration of all the good things the pupils had achieved. This included improvements to the attendance figures, recent swimming awards, details of pupils' artwork displayed in the local library, and a report of pupils singing old time music-hall songs to local senior citizens. This focus on positive achievement raised parents' expectations of the school.

84. Some governing bodies develop better links with the local media and take every opportunity to highlight the school's achievements in newspapers or on the local radio. A positive article in a local paper can help governors get their message across.

The governors of one secondary school in special measures persuaded a local paper to publish an article about the good progress being made. This had more of an impact on some parents than a newsletter sent home from school, even though the information was essentially the same. From the governors' point of view, anything which brought the school's success to the attention of the local community was a good thing, restoring the local community's pride in the school.



Monitoring and Evaluating the School

Knowing how well the school is performing

85. Two of the most important functions of governors is their monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, yet in many schools these are often the weakest areas of their work.

Initial difficulties

86. Where there are problems, schools fall into two categories:
- (a) those with governing bodies who have failed to realise that monitoring and evaluation are important parts of their role, usually because they have failed to keep up with developments in the way governors are now required to operate; and
 - (b) those schools where the governors believed they were monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, but were not doing so effectively.
87. In the latter group of schools, the headteacher, intentionally or through incompetence, often kept the true picture of the school's performance from the governing body. A headteacher may report to governors what the school has been doing, for example, without actually saying what impact these actions have had.

By the end of the meeting we had checked and discussed with the headteacher that the school development plan was being implemented as planned; the school budget had sufficient funds for the rest of the school year; and had been shown that the pupils' most recent national test results had improved on those for last year. Obviously, we felt we were monitoring and evaluating the school. As it turned out, we later learned that although the school development plan was being implemented, nobody was checking to see what impact the work was having; with a predicted fall in the number of pupils in the school the budget was likely to go into deficit if we did not lose a teacher; and although our test results were better than last year, they were really low compared to similar schools. In effect, we simply did not have a firm grip on what was going on at all!

88. Governors are more effective when they recognise the difference between monitoring, which is checking that actions are being or have been taken, and evaluation, which is measuring the effect of the actions on the school's performance.



Knowing the difference:

Monitoring: checking that actions are being or have been taken

Evaluating: measuring the effect of the actions on the school's performance

Monitoring and evaluating the school's action plan

89. The first important monitoring and evaluation task for governors in a school placed in special measures relates to the post-inspection action plan. However, to many governors it is not immediately obvious how they will go about this. Most governors realise it is important for the headteacher to attend meetings to report on how the implementation of the action plan is progressing, focusing on the improvements being made, not just on the completion of tasks. Governors need to ensure this is done in a rigorous way. Governors need to know who among the staff is responsible for the day-to-day monitoring, and for checking the agreed action is taking place. It is helpful if a governor is linked with each key issue, and checks that monitoring is showing whether action has or has not been taken.
90. The governors need to be clear about how they and the school will evaluate the effectiveness of the action taken. If the action is not having the necessary impact, changes may need to be made, or more time allowed. In schools that give sufficient care to writing the success criteria in the action plan, the plan is easier to evaluate. For example, if the action is to 'introduce a new system for teaching spelling', the success criterion might be 'spelling scores to rise by 10% by the end of two terms'.
91. Other success criteria often refer to quantified improvements in the results of National Curriculum tests, or to a percentage increase in the number of well-taught lessons. A school with a history of excluding pupils may set itself a specific target for reducing exclusions.
92. Using precise success criteria in this way allows governors to monitor and evaluate the effect of the actions taken, praising the staff when targets are reached and asking for reasons if targets are not met.
93. Not all improvements can be specifically quantified, but governors need to be wary of success criteria that are too vague.



In one school where pupils' behaviour was criticised, the action plan outlined how a new behaviour policy would be introduced, and the success criteria were: 'staff implement the policy and pupils' behaviour improves', whereas in another school with the same issue to address the success criteria were 'all staff implement the policy consistently, pupils' behaviour improves, and a 50% reduction in the number of pupils sent to the withdrawal room is achieved by the end of the school year'. Although not perfect as an indicator of improved behaviour, at least a school can know if it has achieved the last of these success criteria, whereas the others can only be evaluated in an impressionistic way.

Monitoring the curriculum

94. Governors should monitor the curriculum in different ways. First, they need to check that the school's curriculum is meeting national requirements, and that all subjects taught have a scheme of work.
95. Most schools make good use of national guidance, for example, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are helping to improve pupils' basic skills, and having a positive impact in raising standards. Where governors are effective, they have a sound understanding of these national initiatives, often gained from training they have shared with staff, or because named governors are linked with these areas of the curriculum.
96. In many schools governors improve their skills in using assessment data. Often this is because the teachers have developed good systems for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress as they move through the school. Most schools make sound use of assessment information from the results of statutory and optional National Curriculum tests, and other recognised standardised tests. Effective governors use the results of these to compare the school's performance with the results of recent years, of national and LEA averages, and with similar schools. Secondary schools often make a detailed analysis of general certificate of education examination results and advanced level results.

Questions governors should ask when monitoring pupils' attainment:

- how do our results compare overall and by subject with those of previous years? (*are they rising, holding steady, or falling? Have we met our targets?*)
- how do they compare with national standards?
- how do they compare with similar schools?
- how well do different groups of pupils progress? (*key stages, year groups, gender, ethnicity, special educational needs, high attainers?*)
- how do different subjects compare with each other?



97. Governors respond to the answers to these questions in different ways. If, for example, examination results or the results of end-of-key-stage tests show a marked improvement, governors usually send their congratulations to the staff. If, however, results in English are considerably lower than in mathematics, effective governors will ask questions about why this is so.
98. In some schools governors are given advanced warning that test results are likely to be lower than in previous years. This could be because the school's tracking systems show a particular cohort of pupils to have a very high proportion with special educational needs. Nonetheless, effective governors will want to know what the school has done to provide these pupils with extra support, and whether the results they have achieved are commensurate with their capabilities.
99. Where governors become more efficient at monitoring and evaluating the school's results, they often have a clearer view of what the curriculum priorities need to be in the next development phase.

In one secondary school the governors realised from the GCSE results that the science and modern languages departments had not yet succeeded in improving standards. Pupils consistently performed less well in these subjects than in others, although in the new science teacher's class the results were more encouraging. Governors agreed that the next school development plan should set clear targets for raising attainment and improving examination results in these departments.

100. Information about the performance of each school, and how it compares with other schools, is contained in a document published by OFSTED called the PANDA (Performance and Assessment) report, which is sent to all schools. Governors should know what the PANDA says about their school, because it may raise a number of important questions or help governors to set realistic targets.

In one primary school the governors felt that pupils' low levels of achievement were due to the social deprivation of the catchment area. However, when they looked at the information in their school's PANDA, they realised the pupils' achievements were low even compared with schools in similar circumstances. This helped them to ask questions as to why the pupils were doing so badly, and what could be done to bring them at least in line with similar schools.

Visiting the school

101. Governors can and should monitor and evaluate the school's progress on the action plan in other ways than at meetings. In a number of schools in special measures some governors made a point of visiting the school to see for themselves what improvements were being made. These visits need to be well planned if they are to be worthwhile. Without careful planning they achieve little.



One governor visited his primary school, wishing to be supportive and to see how the school was progressing. In reality the governor had tea with the headteacher, preventing her from engaging in more purposeful tasks, circulated round the different classrooms, introducing himself to the staff, talked in an unfocused way to the pupils, and finally left, saying he was pleased with what he had seen. His visit was of no practical benefit to the school whatsoever.

102. Some governors are anxious about observing teaching and learning, feeling that they are neither qualified to judge the quality of what they see, nor that it is their role to do so. It is helpful for this issue to be debated within the school, because staff need to be protected from misplaced and ill-informed criticisms from governors about the quality of the educational provision. There have been examples of governors who have wanted to 'inspect' lessons in a formal way. This has nearly always led to serious tensions within the school, and been unhelpful to the teachers. The headteacher needs to agree with governors what it is appropriate for them to do, and what should be properly left to the senior staff.
103. Nonetheless, if governors are to monitor and evaluate the school's work they need to visit the school. When handled well these visits build up trust and respect between staff and the governing body, and they allow governors to monitor the school's work in a way that is far more supportive than if they just attend meetings. The visits to school by governors work well when the focus of the visit is carefully agreed in advance, and understood by all involved.

In one secondary school the governor linked to special educational needs visited the school to talk to the special educational needs co-ordinator. The provision for pupils with special educational needs had been severely criticised in the school's inspection report, and the governor wanted to see how the tasks identified in the action plan were translating into practice. It had been previously agreed that the governor would:

- (a) observe a new development, whereby a small group of pupils received extra support for reading;*
- (b) talk to a classroom assistant about the new ways in which she helped pupils in lessons; and*
- (c) talk with the co-ordinator about the improvements being made within the department.*

It was also agreed that the governor would write a short record of the visit for other governors to read. At the end of the visit the governor felt she had a greater understanding of special needs issues, and a clearer picture of how the school was tackling the criticisms made in the inspection report.



104. Some visits are less formal, but still give governors the opportunity to observe and monitor the daily working of the school.

One governor in a special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties enjoyed his visits on Wednesday afternoons to help with aspects of design and technology. Through these visits he built up a positive relationship with both staff and pupils, and was able to appreciate the different strategies used by staff to control the excesses of behaviour of some of the older boys.

105. In a number of schools, governors attend training sessions with staff, in order to develop a shared understanding of new initiatives. Some teachers and governors, for example, have jointly attended training on the National Numeracy Framework, usually where the teacher is the numeracy co-ordinator and the governor is linked to numeracy in the school. Such joint training can have a marked impact on the relationship between staff and governors, reinforcing the idea that the two groups are working together to develop the school. In some schools, members of the governing body have attended staff meetings to support the introduction of an important new development, such as a draft policy on behaviour. This can give governors an insight into the views of the staff, and an appreciation of the practical difficulties they may be facing.

106. Governors should always make sure that their visits to the school are recorded in some way, so they can monitor the pattern of visits that have taken place. Some schools have designed a special form for governors that records who visited and when, what the focus of the visit was, and contains a brief reflection on what took place. This works well, and can be shared with other governors. Other schools just require the governor to speak briefly about their visit at a governors' meeting, and this is recorded in the minutes.

One governor visited her junior school with a specific focus to see the new information technology suite in action. In her report to the governors she was very positive about the new equipment, the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils, the speed at which they managed the task, and the views of the teacher about the layout of the new suite. She brought samples of the pupils' data-handling work to a later governors' meeting. Her report also expressed her concern that the chairs the pupils were using were not the right height for good posture, and ventilation in the room was inadequate. The headteacher was subsequently able to make improvements to address the two issues she had raised.

Monitoring visits by governors should:

- follow discussions about the protocols involved
- have an agreed focus
- be carefully planned
- be recorded for or reported to other governors.



Conclusion

107. Governors are key people in our schools and the value of their contribution to the quality of education provided can be considerable. Where governors are successful, they give constructive support to school improvement; they have a proper say in how the school is to move forward, and a clear view about the school's priorities; they are kept well informed about the impact of developments, and know how well the school is performing; they ask pertinent questions of senior managers to check that everything is being done to ensure that the pupils receive a good education.
108. As a group, governors' work is made easier if they have well-defined working procedures and routines. Individual governors perform best when they are clear exactly what is expected of them, and how their contribution fits into the bigger picture.

Appendix

Useful addresses and contact numbers

The following organisations and associations provide various forms of advice and support for governors and governing bodies:

- Information for School and College Governors (ISCG)
At Avondale Park School
Sirdar Road
London
W11 4EE

Tel: 020 7229 0200

e-mail: ISCG@governors.fsnet.co.uk

- National Association of Governors and Managers (NAGM)
Suite 1
4th Floor
Western House
Smallbrook Queensway
Birmingham
B5 4HQ

Tel: 0121 643 5787

e-mail: governorhq@hotmail.com

- National Governors' Council (NGC)
Glebe House
Church Street
Crediton
Devon
EX17 2A

Tel: 01363 774377

e-mail: ngc@ngc.org.uk

Governors can also receive free information and support across all aspects of school life from an advice line which is funded by the Department for Education and Employment. It is:

- GovernorLine

Tel: 08000 722 181



Useful websites and publications

The OFSTED website includes a comprehensive list of recent and currently available publications, some of which may be of particular interest to governors. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) has a website specially for governors; this provides up-to-date information on a variety of topics. The website addresses are:

OFSTED home website:

www.ofsted.gov.uk

DfEE School Governors' Centre website:

www.dfes.gov.uk/governor/index.htm

Particular attention is drawn to the following documents which contain information and ideas on topics covered in this publication.

- *Action Planning for School Improvement – guidance for schools and LEAs*
Available free of charge from the OFSTED website only.
- *Lessons Learned (Code: HMI 176)*
Available free of charge from the OFSTED website or from the Publications Centre.
- *Making Headway (Code: HMI 143)*
Available free of charge from the OFSTED website or from the Publications Centre.
- *Governing Bodies and Effective Schools*
Available from DfEE publications.
- *Roles of Governing Bodies and Headteachers (Guidance)*
Available from the DfEE School Governors' Centre website.

Free OFSTED publications are available from:

OFSTED Publications Centre

Orders: 07002 637833

Fax: 07002 693274

e-mail: freepublications@ofsted.gov.uk

DfEE publications are available from:

DfEE Publications: 0845 6022260

Internet: www.dfes.gov.uk

